

What is claimed is:

1. A method for enabling a telephone to send and receive electronic messages, comprising:

(a) providing at least one of a switch and server, said at least one of a switch and server being in communication with at least one internal telephone; and

5 (b) performing, at the at least one of a switch and server, at least one of a first, second, and third set of operations,

wherein the first set of operations comprises the steps of:

(i) receiving an electronic text message intended for a user associated with the at least one internal telephone;

10 (ii) determining that the electronic message is to be directed to the at least one internal telephone; and

(iii) causing the text of the electronic message to be displayed on a display of the at least one internal telephone; and

wherein the second set of operations comprises the steps of:

15 (i) receiving, from the at least one internal telephone, a plurality of signals associated with activation of one or more activators;

(ii) associating the plurality of signals with one or more corresponding letters and/or numbers to provide text for a message;

20 (iii) forming the text into an electronic message comprising a source address, a destination address, and the text; and

(iv) forwarding the electronic message to the destination address; and

wherein the third set of operations comprises the steps of:

(i) receiving, from the at least one internal telephone, a request to view text of a selected electronic message; and

25 (ii) causing the text of the electronic message to be displayed on a display of the at least one internal telephone.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the first set of operations is performed.

3. The method of Claim 2, further comprising:
activating a ring tone to notify the user of the arrival of the electronic text message.

4. The method of Claim 2, further comprising:
redefining, in a manner set forth in the electronic text message, at least one of the symbols and functions associated with a plurality of the feature activators on the at least one internal telephone.

5. The method of Claim 4, wherein activating a redefined feature activator causes the at least one of a switch and a server to associate a redefined corresponding at least one of the symbol and function with the activated feature activator.

6. The method of Claim 5, wherein the redefined corresponding at least one of the symbol and function is different from a default corresponding at least one of the symbol and function.

7. The method of Claim 2, wherein, in the causing step, the text of the electronic message is displayed at least substantially simultaneously on the displays of a plurality of internal telephones.

8. A computer readable medium containing executable instructions to perform the steps of Claim 2.

9. A logic circuit operable to perform the steps of Claim 2.

10. The method of Claim 1, wherein the second set of operations is performed.

11. The method of Claim 10, wherein the associating step comprises mapping the received plurality of signals against a mapping table to identify the one or more corresponding letters and/or numbers.

12. The method of Claim 10, wherein, in the associating step, a predetermined text message is associated with at least one of the plurality of signals.

13. The method of Claim 10, wherein in the forming step the destination address is the source address of a received electronic text message to which the formed electronic message is responsive.

14. The method of Claim 10, wherein in the forming step the destination address is selected from the user among a predetermined set of destination addresses.

15. The method of Claim 10, wherein the first and second operations are performed and further comprising, before the associating step, changing an operational mode of the at least one internal telephone from a call mode to a message mode.

16. A computer readable medium containing executable instructions to perform the steps of Claim 10.

17. A logic circuit operable to perform the steps of Claim 10.

18. The method of Claim 1, wherein the third set of operations is performed.

19. The method of Claim 18, wherein the displayed electronic message is deleted in response to a signal received from the user.

20. A computer readable medium containing executable instructions to perform the steps of Claim 18.

21. A logic circuit operable to perform the steps of Claim 18.

22. A method for accessing switch functionality from an external endpoint, comprising:

providing at least one of a switch and server, at least one internal endpoint, and at least one external endpoint, each of the at least one internal and external endpoints being in communication with the at least one of a switch and server and associated with a common user, wherein the at least one internal endpoint comprises a plurality of feature activators for activating a plurality of features;

receiving from the at least one external endpoint an incoming contact comprising a packet-switched communication comprising an identity of at least one of a feature activator and a feature;

determining when the identified at least one of a feature activator and feature has a corresponding entry in a stored list of identifiers, the entries in the stored list of identifiers being associated with at least one of (i) a plurality of feature activator identifiers associated with the plurality of feature activators and (ii) a plurality of feature identifiers associated with the plurality of features; and

when the identified at least one of a feature activator and feature has a corresponding entry in the stored list, activating at least one of the associated feature activator and feature.

23. The method of Claim 22, wherein the contact is received at the external port of the at least one of a switch and server from an originator terminal utilizable external to a premises serviced by the at least one of a switch and server and not having an extension associated with any internal endpoint serviced by the at least one of a switch and server.

24. The method of Claim 22, wherein the determining step comprises mapping the identified at least one of a feature activator and feature associated with the incoming contact to the corresponding entry in the stored list.

25. The method of Claim 22, wherein the corresponding entry is at least one of the plurality of feature activator identifiers.

26. The method of Claim 22, wherein the corresponding entry is at least one of the plurality of feature identifiers.

27. The method of Claim 22, wherein the incoming contact is originated by an originator terminal comprising a computer coupled to a packet-switched network external to a premises serviced by the at least one of a switch and server.

28. The method of Claim 22, wherein in the activating step the at least one of a switch and server processes the associated at least one of the plurality of feature activator identifiers and plurality of feature identifiers as if the user had pressed the associated feature activator in the internal endpoint while the internal endpoint was in service and off hook.

29. The method of Claim 22, wherein the plurality of features are selected from one or more of the following sets of features: (a) features that are invoked prior to placing a contact, (b) features that are invoked during a contact, (c) features that are non-contact associated that do not require display interactions, (d) features that are non-contact associated

5 that require display interactions, (e) features that are operated against contacts not associated with the activating station, and (f) features that are operated against an alerting contact.

30. The method of Claim 22, wherein the plurality of features comprise a plurality of the following features: analog bridged appearance select, abbreviated dialing, active appearance select, automatic appearance select, automatic call back, automatic intercom, autodial, bridged appearance selection, call appearance selection, call forwarding all, call forwarding busy/no answer, call forwarding deactivation, call park, call unpark, call pick-up, conference no answer, conference, calling party number block, calling party number unblock, dial intercom, directed call pick-up, drop last added party, drop call, exclusion (which prevents a user from being active on the same call on a physical port and a trunk port), extend call off-at least one of a switch and server enable (to enable the mapping agent), extend call off-at least one of a switch and server disable (to disable the mapping agent), group page, handover, held appearance select, hunt night service, last number dialed, malicious call trace activation, malicious call trace deactivation, manual message waiting, priority call, send all calls, manual signaling, transfer on hang up, transfer to voice mail, and trunk night service.

31. The method of Claim 22, wherein the identified at least one of a feature activator and feature is associated with an internal extension associated with the at least one of a switch and server.

32. The method of Claim 22, wherein, in the stored list, the plurality of feature activator identifiers are based upon activator position on the internal endpoint.

33. The method of Claim 22, wherein the at least one internal endpoint comprises a plurality of internal endpoints, each of the plurality of internal endpoints having a plurality of corresponding feature activators and wherein a common identified at least one of a feature activator and feature defines a first feature for a first internal endpoint and a second feature
5 for a second internal endpoint and the first and second features are different.

34. The method of Claim 22, further comprising:
providing an electronic message to the user after the activating step, the electronic message indicating the success or failure of feature activation.

35. The method of Claim 22, wherein the packet-switched communication comprises a source address, a destination address, and a body, wherein the destination address is associated with the at least one of switch and server.

36. The method of Claim 22, wherein the packet-switched communication comprises a source address, a destination address, and a body, wherein the identity of the at least one of feature activator and feature is located in the body.

37. The method of Claim 22, wherein the packet-switched communication comprises a header and a body, wherein the identity of the at least one of feature activator and feature is located in the header.

38. A method for configuring a communication device for electronic messages, comprising:

providing a communication device comprising a plurality of feature activators, wherein in a first operational mode the plurality of feature activators are associated with a first set of symbols and/or functions; and

reconfiguring the plurality of feature activators in a second operational mode of the communication device, wherein in the second operational mode the plurality of feature activators are associated with a second set of symbols and/or functions, the first and second sets being different.

39. The method of Claim 38, wherein the second set is defined by an electronic message received for the communication device.

40. The method of Claim 39, wherein activating one of the reconfigured plurality of activators causes a predetermined response to be returned to a sender of the electronic message.

41. The method of Claim 38, wherein the first operational mode is a call mode and the second operational mode is a message mode.

42. The method of Claim 39, further comprising:
when the communication device is in the second operational mode, receiving a plurality of signals associated with activation of at least one of the plurality of activators;

mapping the received plurality of signals against the second set to identify associated
5 symbols, the associated symbols defining a text message; and
forwarding the text message as an electronic message to a second communication
device.

43. The method of Claim 38, wherein the second set comprises at least the following members: a plurality of letters, a plurality of punctuation marks, at least one scroll command, a delete command, and a command to exit from the second operational mode.

44. The method of Claim 38, wherein the first set comprises at least the following members: a plurality of numbers, activate/deactivate a speaker in the communication device, mute a microphone, call transfer, redial, conference call, hold, call appearance, and softkey features.

45. A computer readable medium containing executable instructions to perform the steps of Claim 38.

46. A logic circuit operable to perform the steps of Claim 38.